

# **NLLN Continuing Education Scholarship Reports for 2007/2008**

## **Brook Berg Spotlight on Books 2008 April 11 & 12, 2008**

Events that made this Spotlight like no other!

- A snowstorm dropped close to a foot of snow in the surrounding areas and canceled postal delivery in Duluth.
- The company of hearty souls who braved the impending storm to arrive at Ruttger's on Thursday evening.
- The hotel staff (desk and kitchen) who, even though the food truck did not come, made their way to Ruttger's and provided us with all the help we could ask for and really good meals!
- Jim Trelease, who recently retired, gave us a fascinating, thought provoking and humor-filled presentation on how to create, nurture, and encourage readers on Friday afternoon and evening.
- Mary Casanova, who is always a favorite, came through the heaviest snow to present Saturday morning to talk about her writing, her books and her life in northern MN.
- Debra Frasier, who I have never seen before and creates magnificent, award-winning picture books, took us along to view the creation process for "A Birthday Cake is No Ordinary Cake." She highlighted her other books, including Miss Alaineus: A Vocabulary Disaster and shared with us her visit to Italy for the production of the ballet based on her book, "On the Day You Were Born." It was fascinating!
- D.J. MacHale, though the last author to present was not the least! The Pendragon series is one of the hottest in my LMC right now, so I was hoping to glean something from his presentation to bring back to my readers. I was not disappointed. Learning that he hated to write while in public school and the way he and his friends avoided it is an interesting factoid that I will use with my readers. Moreover, the upcoming Pendragon graphic novels and having seen the next cover will be interesting to his fans at my middle school.

As I always say and will say again with complete sincerity, this year's Spotlight was the best conference I attended this year. Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge is a gorgeous setting, even buried under a foot of snow, with no food trucks making it through the storm; we were welcomed and treated like "royalty."

My favorite presenter, and the one of the main reasons I came, was Jim Trelease. His excellent sessions were main even more special to me because he came out of retirement to speak to us. His manner was energetic, his anecdotes by halves was humorous and touching, and his research and advice impeccable. Friday was really a once in a lifetime event and I am more than pleased to have been part of it.

Unfortunately, due to another engagement, I had to leave before the author panel, so cannot speak to that, but given the variety of guest authors, I am sure it was excellent.

My attendance, made possible through the Northern Lights Scholarship, will enrich my library this year with the books and anecdotes I brought back, but since I will have a change in my teaching assignment next year, it has also given me idea for my classroom that will enrich students in the future! I hope to have the opportunity to continue to attend Spotlight.

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